

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE BEGINNING OF BYZANTINE CHRONOGRAPHY: JOHN MALALAS

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The chronicle of John Malalas, written in the course of the sixth century, is the earliest extant example of a Byzantine world chronicle.¹ This is a genre which, combining secular and biblical history, presents a Christian account of world history from creation to the author's own day. Malalas' chronicle was influential; it was quoted and excerpted very soon after it reached its final form and material derived from it shaped the Byzantine perception of the past throughout the Byzantine millennium. However, though the chronicle was treated as a serious work by the author's contemporaries and immediate successors, scholars in the West from the Renaissance onwards have regarded it with contempt since it conspicuously fails to conform to classical norms of language, style and presentation. Only in recent years has there developed an awareness that this text might represent something more than ignorant and semi-literate babblings. Much, however, still remains uncertain about the purposes and nature of the work, which may be clarified now that a new edition of the Greek text has appeared.

The Chronicle: Contents and Purpose

Malalas' chronicle survives in many extracts and translations. In its main witness, the eleventh or twelfth-century Oxford manuscript *Baroccianus 182*,² the chronicle is presented in eighteen books, which

¹ Frequent reference will be made in this chapter to papers which were produced in conjunction with the 1986 English translation (cf. Bibliography): E. Jeffreys, ed., with B. Croke and R. Scott, *Studies in John Malalas* (Sydney, 1990) (hereafter, *Studies*).

² Henceforth Ba; for a description, see E. Jeffreys, "Malalas in Greek", *Studies*, 245–8.

run from the creation of Adam to the reign of Justinian. Thus Book I deals with Adam, Noah and the Flood and its consequences, and the Egyptians; II–IV covers the early Greek states—Argos, Athens and Thebes—and the early history of Israel after Abraham; V treats the Trojan War at great length; VI deals with the Babylonian captivity, the kingdoms of Lydia and Persia and Roman history in the person of Aeneas; VII is concerned with the foundation of Rome, VIII with Alexander and the Hellenistic kingdoms, IX with Roman republican history, leading up to Augustus and the birth of Christ at the beginning of book X, where there is a chronological excursus; X ends with Nerva (A.D. 98); XI–XII deal with the period from Trajan to the Tetrarchy, focussing on Antioch (A.D. 98–305); XIII runs from Constantine, the first Christian emperor, to Theodosius I (A.D. 305–402); XIV deals with Theodosius II to Leo II (A.D. 402–474); XV to XVIII each deal with one emperor—Zeno (XV: A.D. 474–491), Anastasius (XVI: A.D. 491–518), Justin (XVII: A.D. 518–527) and Justinian (XVIII: A.D. 527–565).

In its present form Ba, in addition to other lacunas, has lost its final folios and so breaks off in 563. However it is clear that the chronicle in this manuscript would have continued to the end of the reign of Justinian, in 565. For this the main arguments are that the two folios missing from the last gathering³ would have been sufficient to cover the remaining two years of the reign, to judge by the average space for each year taken at this point, and that the opening entry for XVIII gives the total number of years for Justinian (XVIII § 1; Th 354, Bo 425: 38 years, 7 months and 13 days),⁴ indicating that the chronicle was completed after his death. Furthermore, other witnesses, such as John of Ephesus (d. ca. 580), knew that Malalas' chronicle extended to the end of Justinian's reign.⁵

³ See Jeffreys, *ibid.*, for a discussion on how the number of folios lost from Ba can be gauged accurately on the basis of gathering marks.

⁴ References are to Books (in Roman numerals) and paragraphs (§) according to the 1986 translation (the paragraphing does not always correspond to that of the new edition), and to page numbers according to both Thurn's edition (Th) and the 1831 Bonn edition (Bo). All translated quotations are taken from the 1986 translation.

⁵ The *Laterculus Malalianus*, a late seventh-century Latin text, much of whose material derives from Malalas, concludes with an emperor list clearly related to Malalas' entries on imperial reign lengths; the last entry lists Justin with a reign of 9 years (inaccurately). This suggests that Malalas may have extended his chronicle into Justin's reign. Though there is a little further evidence in favour of this proposal, it is ultimately unconvincing.

The chronicle's preamble, which also survives in a mutilated form only, and not in Ba, sets out the work's programme.⁶ The author proposes to "abbreviate the Hebrew books written by Moses", that is, to deal with biblical history, and then to add narratives taken from chroniclers, poets and historians, that is, to deal with secular history, and finally to give "a summary account of events that took place in the time of the emperors, up till the events of my own lifetime which came to my hearing, . . . to the reign of Zeno and those who ruled afterwards" (the implications of this for the biography of Malalas will be discussed below). In its eighteen-book format the chronicle can be perceived as falling into two halves, pivoting at Book X, each fulfilling a part of the preamble's objectives. Biblical and secular history are interwoven in the first nine books, culminating with the end of the Roman republic, the advent of Augustus and the birth of Christ. Christ's incarnation is prominent at the beginning of Book X, which like all subsequent books, is structured in terms of imperial reigns, Malalas' second focal point in the preamble. The position of the two passages on Christ's incarnation at the pivotal point between books IX and X suggests, not surprisingly, that this was a key event in Malalas' perception of world history and also that the whole work was structured to emphasise this. It is also possible to suggest other structural divisions within the chronicle: that it falls into triads of six book sections (I–VI, VII–XII, XIII–XVIII), emphasising in turn the East Roman Empire's heritage from the Old Testament, from Rome and then from the Christian empire.⁷ All this argues that the chronicle was conceived from its inception in eighteen books (and thus that any extension after 565 did not form a nineteenth book); it also indicates that one guiding hand was responsible for its composition throughout.

It is, however, clear that the chronicle appeared in at least two

⁶ As well as losing its last two folios Ba has also lost its first gathering. The text printed as Book I in Dindorf's Bonn edition is taken from a manuscript of George Monachos. The true preamble, now published in Thurn's edition, is found in a fragmentary Greek manuscript (P: Paris, Supplementum Graecum 682, ff. 9–14 [published by V. Istrin, in *Zapiski Imp. Akademii Nauk*, ser. 8, vol. 1, no. 3 (St Petersburg, 1897), 1–29]); in a version of John of Antioch, on whom see below (B: Parisinus Graecus 1630, ff. 236–9); and also in the Slavonic translation (on which see below briefly, and S. Franklin, "Malalas in Slavonic", *Studies*, 276–87).

⁷ R. Scott, "Malalas' View of the Classical Past", in G.W. Clarke et al., eds., *Reading the Past in Late Antiquity* (Canberra, 1990), 147–64; B. Croke, "Malalas: The man and his work", *Studies*, 1–25, at 2.

editions. First, much of Book XVIII is very different from the rest of the chronicle: the chronicle's focus has become Constantinople rather than Antioch and the entries are brief and annalistic rather than discursive and topic-based. Second, later excerptors, such as Evagrius (532/7–593/4), the *Chronicon Paschale* (ca. 632) and the Slavonic translation (10th–11th centuries) used versions of the chronicle which ended much earlier than the surviving text—around 527–528, though there is no agreement over the exact finishing point of the chronicle which they knew.⁸ John of Ephesos, however, writing slightly before Evagrius, and in Constantinople rather than Antioch, used Malalas' chronicle in a form which included the extended version of Book XVIII.⁹ Perhaps the most likely original ending point of the first edition came with the Endless Peace with Persia in 532/3 (and thus at Book XVIII § 76, Th 401, Bo 478).¹⁰

The pivotal position of the passages on Christ's incarnation has a bearing on the reasons for the chronicle's composition. The chronological underpinning of the entire chronicle is a framework of dates calculated 'From Adam', that is, from creation. Twenty of these dates survive, some clear and unequivocal, others corrupt beyond possibility of reconstruction, others obscured in Ba but recoverable from other witnesses.¹¹ From these it becomes apparent that Malalas is working with an idiosyncratic series of calculations. For him Christ's incarnation took place in the year 5967 From Adam and his crucifixion in the year 6000, thus ushering in at that point the seventh millennium. Of the various calculations generally used by Byzantine chroniclers and chronographers, the most common placed the incarnation in 5500, which allowed the year 6000 (with whatever fateful consequences it might have in terms of Christ's Second Coming) to arrive

⁸ Evagrius uses Malalas for events between 502 (when his previous source, Eustathius of Epiphaneia, ceased) and 526 where his copy of Malalas broke off (Evagr. *HE* 4,5; the *Chronicon Paschale* does not know of Malalas as a source after the Nika Riot in 532 (M. Whitby and M. Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale 284–628 A.D.*, Liverpool, 1989, xix); the Slavonic version breaks off in 528 (Franklin, "Malalas in Slavonic", *Studies*, 284).

⁹ F. Nau, "Analyse de la seconde partie inédite de l'Histoire Ecclésiastique de Jean d'Asie", *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 2 (1897), 455–93, at 493; and W. Witakowski, "Malalas in Syriac", *Studies*, 299–310, at 305–6.

¹⁰ See B. Croke, "Malalas: The man", *Studies*, 17–25 for a survey of the issues.

¹¹ These dates are discussed by E. Jeffreys in "Malalas' use of the past", in G.W. Clarke et al., eds., *Reading the Past in Late Antiquity* (Canberra, 1990), 121–46 and in *eadem*, "Chronological structures in Malalas' chronicle", *Studies*, 111–66, at 111–20. See further below.

at some point in the late fifth century.¹² By the Alexandrian era, whose use was widespread, the year 6000 would have arrived in 491 A.D. There is enough evidence to indicate that this was a matter of concern to the Orthodox world, and in particular to the church in Syria.¹³ Millennial preoccupations then were a major impulse for Malalas' composition. The thrust of the arguments and calculations he presents is that fears over the passing of the millennium are irrelevant, since this event was already long past.

John Malalas: Author

Virtually nothing is known of Malalas outside the chronicle that goes under his name, and even within the chronicle there is little that is clear. Later contemporaries knew of him under a variety of names: Evagrius referred to him as John the Rhetor, while John of Ephesos preferred John of Antioch. For John of Damascus in the eighth century, in the Constantinian excerpts in the tenth century and John Tzetzes' *Chiliades* in the twelfth he appears as John Malelas or Malalas as well as John of Antioch. Regrettably, more than one writer named John came from Antioch in the late sixth and early seventh centuries, a source of some confusion both at the time and in modern scholarship; to be distinguished are John Malalas, the chronicler; John Scholastikos, patriarch in Constantinople (565–577) and author amongst other things of an important collection of canon law;¹⁴ John, patriarch of Antioch (631–649); and John of Antioch, a historian writing in the early seventh century who drew extensively on Malalas.¹⁵

¹² V. Grumel, *La chronologie* (Paris, 1958), 24 for a general discussion of Byzantine calculations of years from creation; B. Croke, "Malalas: The man", *Studies*, 35–6 on Malalas' relation to mainstream views.

It should be pointed out that the figures in Ba for the chronological excursions in Books X and XVIII have been corrupted, and are in need of emendation; Von Stauffenberg made the necessary emendations in his edition in 1931, as has Thurn in 2000, but the English translation in 1986 did not, though the discussion in *Studies*, 1990, is predicated on the emendations; they will appear in future re-editions of the translation.

¹³ S.A. Harvey, "Remembering the Pain: Syriac historiography and the separation of the churches", *Byzantium* 58, 295–308.

¹⁴ Referred to by Evagrius as John ἐκ τοῦ Σηρημίου and carefully distinguished from the historian.

¹⁵ John of Antioch's history deserves a new edition. In at least one manuscript (Paris, Gr. 1630, ff. 236–9, referred to as B in the 1986 translation of Malalas) the

The name John Malalas is found in the chronicle's preamble. The heading in the Greek reads "A report from John", and continues "descended from the time of Constantine the Great"; the Slavonic translation, however, reads "originally from the city of Antioch the Great" and follows with a phrase that can either mean "in lesser Syria" or can be emended to give the genitive of the name Malalas. In view of the other testimony to this form of the chronicler's name, it would seem reasonable to emend to "Malalas", though the fragile nature of the evidence should be noted.¹⁶

It was suggested above that one author was responsible for shaping and producing the whole chronicle. This, together with the comments in the preamble about events in his own lifetime "which came to my hearing", associated with the reign of Zeno, has implications about Malalas' date of birth and his life-span. Zeno reigned from 474 to 491; Justinian died in 565. It would be physically feasible, even if a little unlikely, for a not-quite centenarian writer, born in the first years of Zeno's reign, to pen the last words of his record in the years immediately following Justinian's death; other writers in the sixth century, notably Jordanes and Cassiodorus, were active to an advanced age. But the phrasing of the preamble offers other interpretations: "to my hearing" suggests the use of oral informants. These could be Malalas' immediate contemporaries, and there are certainly signs that he did make use of such informants (as is discussed below). It is perhaps more likely that they were older contemporaries, belonging to the generations of his parents or grandparents; this would give him access to a further twenty years and more of conscious memories from each generation to add to his own observations. Thus, to have access to oral informants with memories of Zeno's reign, Malalas need not have been born until 510, or even after. However, given that an edition of the chronicle was completed by the early 530s (as will be discussed shortly) and arguably shows signs of Malalas' professional interests, it is necessary to go back before 510. Perhaps one would not be too far wrong in placing Malalas' birth in the decade 490 to 500, thus making him a septuagenarian at Justinian's death.

The preamble with its evidence for John Malalas' name allows further deductions to be made about the author's background. The

first two books of John of Antioch's work are apparently taken unchanged from Malalas.

¹⁶ See the apparatus to this passage in the 1986 translation and in Thurn's edition.

name Malalas conceals the Syriac root ‘mll’, which has meanings and implications of ‘eloquent’ or ‘learned’; it interprets the Greek term ‘rhetor’.¹⁷ Coming from Antioch, a Greek enclave in a Syriac-speaking region, this surely means that John Malalas came from a Syriac-speaking background and underwent a reasonably extensive education. This would have been an education in Greek, involving Greek literary culture—there were no alternatives. The knowledge of the Greek and Roman cultural heritage displayed in the chronicle should not be seen, then, as a haphazard collection of bric-a-brac but the result of a rhetorical training. If the results seem strange to us then this is as likely to be due to the loss of comparable material as it is to Malalas’ own idiosyncracies.¹⁸

Further suggestions about Malalas’ life and interests have to be gleaned from the chronicle itself. Here again it is relevant to remember the arguments that one author shaped the whole work so that, despite indications that many sources were used to construct the chronicle (as will be discussed below), it is justifiable to look for features that point towards Malalas’ individual interests.

It is obvious, for example, that Malalas and his chronicle have an interest in Antioch. This interest is clear in all parts of the text: the foundation legends of the city are given in detail, imperial reigns in books X–XII are couched largely in terms of imperial visits to Antioch and the imperial building campaigns there,¹⁹ there is much information

¹⁷ The possible Syriac forms are discussed by Witakowski, “Malalas in Syriac”, *Studies*, 299–310, at 305–6, note 108.

¹⁸ Parallels to the attitudes shown by Malalas can be found in writers deemed respectably learned, such as Procopius or John the Lydian (see R. Scott, “Malalas and his Contemporaries”, *Studies*, 67–85) as well as in those usually put on the lunatic fringe, such as Cosmas Indicopleustes (P. Odorico, “L’uomo nuovo di Cosma Indicopleustes e di Giovanni Malalas”, *Byzantinoslavica* 56, 1995, 305–15) or Discorus of Aphrodito (L. MacCoull, *Dioscorus of Aphrodito: His work and his world*, Berkeley, 1988).

¹⁹ Foundation legends: VIII §§ 11–15, Th 149–54, Bo 197–203 on the successive Seleucid foundations of Antigonia, Palaiopolis and ultimately Antioch the Great (on the inter-relationship of these narratives, see G. Marasco, “Giovanni Malala e la tradizione ellenistica”, *Museum Helveticum* 54 (1997), 29–44).

Imperial visits and building: e.g. X § 50, Th 199, Bo 263: Domitian; XI § 9, Th 208, Bo 275–6: Trajan, XI § 14, Th 209–10, Bo 278: Hadrian; XI § 24, Th 212, Bo 280–1: Antoninus Pius; XII § 2, Th 215, Bo 283: Commodus; XII § 16, Th 220, Bo 290: Pertinax; XII § 22, Th 224, Bo 294–5: Severus.

The information that Malalas gives on Antiochene topography provides the starting point for the discussions of G. Downey in *A History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest* (Princeton, 1961). On the reliability of Malalas’ information on imperial activities, see G. Downey, “Imperial Building Records in Malalas”, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 38 (1938), 1–15.

on local Antiochene customs,²⁰ much of the Hellenic mythology that appears in the chronicle has an Antiochene connection;²¹ and much circumstantial information is provided on on statues and other features of the Antiochene streetscape.²²

For Malalas, the past is a seamless whole, closely related to his present, and anachronisms are rife: no state, for example, can function without a *basileus* conceived in imperial terms, so that Agamemnon is as likely to summon a *conventus* as Leo I.²³ Malalas is interested in the trappings of the Roman imperial state—in the dress of its officials and the symbolism behind ceremonial²⁴—and in the functioning of that state. Thus he regularly notes the status of a city (whether it is a metropolis and whether it has city rights),²⁵ he records the foundation of provinces in a stereotyped set of phrases;²⁶ he notes, also in a formulaic way, imperial interventions after natural disasters;²⁷

²⁰ For example: II § 7, Th 21, Bo 28: the ritual of door knocking as a memorial rite for Io; VII § 12, Bo 186–7: the beating of a scape-goat in February; X § 52, Th 200, Bo 264: the anti-mosquito talismans at the horse-races of Graste; XI § 4, Th 205–6, Bo 271–3: drum beating in memory of the Persian defeat; XII §§ 3–4, 7–10, Th 216–20, Bo 284–9: the conduct of Antioch's Olympic Games.

²¹ For example, I § 3, Th 5, P 7 and VIII § 16, Th 153, Bo 202: the giants of old were to be found at Pagrae outside Antioch; IV § 11, Th 54, Bo 76: Marysas is the name of a river near Antioch; II § 32–4, Th 32–4, Bo 45–9: the long account of Antiope's sufferings is justified by the presence statues of her sons Zethos and Amphion in Antioch; for other examples, see E. Jeffreys, “Malalas' World View”, *Studies*, 58. M. Mango, “Artemis at Daphne”, *Byzantinische Forschungen* 21 (1995), 263–82 discusses the correlation between the mythological depictions on silver ritual buckets and the mythological material selected by Malalas.

²² For example: V § 67, Th 110–11, Bo 141: the statue of Orestes and its striking posture; VIII § 17, Th 153, Bo 202: statues of a horse's head and a helmet; VIII § 22, Th 155, Bo 205: the Charonion and its apotropaic properties. See also Downey, *Antioch*, *passim*, and A. Moffatt, “A Record of Public Buildings and Monuments”, *Studies*, 87–109.

²³ V § 11, Th 74, Bo 102: Agamemnon; XIV § 40, Th 294, Bo 371: Leo I. For further examples, see E. Jeffreys, “Malalas' World View”, *Studies*, 60–1.

²⁴ There are, for example, discussions on the use of purple dye for imperial costume (II § 9–10, Th 23–5, Bo 32–4), the displaying of imperial busts when magistrates are in session (VII § 2, Th 132–3, Bo 172) and hippodrome symbolism (VII § 4–5, Th 133–7, Bo 173–7); see also E. Jeffreys, “Malalas' World View”, *Studies*, 55–66.

²⁵ A full list, which runs from the elevation of Herakleia under Vespasian (X § 46, Th 198, Bo 262) to that of Laodikeia under Justinian (XVIII § 39, Th 376, Bo 448), is given in E. Jeffreys, “Malalas' sources”, *Studies*, 205, note 22 (17 cases in all).

²⁶ From the creation of Bithynia under Pompey (IX § 13, Th 168, Bo 222) to that of Theodoria under Justinian (XVIII § 39, Th 376, Bo 448): full list, E. Jeffreys, *ibid.*, and M. Jeffreys, “Language of Malalas: formulaic phraseology”, *Studies*, 225–31, at 226–8.

²⁷ M. Jeffreys, *ibid.*, 228.

he has a strong interest in legislation.²⁸ This is the sort of information that would be held in, or pass through, the offices of the administrators of a Roman province, offices which would be staffed by persons of the approximate educational level implied by the name, or nickname, Malalas/rhetor. When it is noted that it is possible to extract from the chronicle a remarkably complete list of the holders of the office of the *comes Orientis*, the administrator of the diocese of Oriens whose base was in Antioch, it becomes an interesting thought that Malalas could well be one of the officials who worked within the *scrinia* of the *comes Orientis*.²⁹ The administrative structures of the diocese of Oriens were re-organised in 535.³⁰ This might well have provided an incentive for Malalas to leave Antioch and move to Constantinople, taking with him the first edition of his chronicle, which he eventually updated with material collected from publicly available resources. Another point at which he may have left Antioch, or been compelled to leave, could have come with the Persian sack of the city in 540.

It is tempting to use comments in the chronicle made in the first person to reconstruct Malalas' movements around the world of the east Mediterranean. Thus there are references to his finding in Thessaloniki a book by an otherwise unknown Brunichius which discussed the historical significance of the scapegoat ritual, to his discovery of a document "in the house of Bassus" authenticating the statue of the miraculously healed woman in Paneas in Palestine, and to a lecture on astrology in Constantinople, given also by an otherwise unknown figure, Fortunus.³¹ There is a strong *prima facie* case that these passages came from Malalas' pen, and would thus place him—at unknowable points in his life—in Thessaloniki, Palestine and Constantinople. But the case is weakened by Malalas' habit of taking phrases over unchanged from his sources.³² There is a comparable

²⁸ R. Scott, "Malalas and Justinian's Codification", in E.M. and M.J. Jeffreys and A. Moffatt, eds., *Byzantine Papers* (Canberra, 1981), 12–31; E. Jeffreys, "Malalas' sources", *Studies*, 201–2.

²⁹ As discussed by B. Croke, "Malalas: The man", *Studies*, 11.

³⁰ Justinian, *Novel* 8.5; on the structures of the *scrinia* and the numbers of officials employed, see A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284–602* (Oxford, 1964), 509, 512 and 592, and on the reorganization, *ibid.*, 281.

³¹ Brunichius: VII § 12, Th 143, Bo 187; Bassus: X § 12, Th 181, Bo 239; Fortunus: I § 1, Th 4, P 6. Note that the statue at Paneas had become something of a cliché in patristic literature, starting from Eusebius, *HE* 7, 18.

³² One clear case is the word "my" which survives in an ambassador's report

situation in connection the phrases about objects which exist ‘to the present day’, when the ‘present day’ is that of the source and not Malalas: thus comments on monuments and rituals in Tyre, Tripolis or Scythopolis almost certainly do not tell us that Malalas himself witnessed them.³³ Malalas certainly did journey from Antioch to Constantinople and may have travelled further, but the details cannot be pressed.

Despite such uncertainties certain aspects of Malalas’ personality can be discerned through the chronicle. Not surprisingly for an author of a chronicle with a Christianising view of the world and with a millennial interest in the Second Coming, there are several strands of religious interests.³⁴ One has to do with a mystic gnosticism, and appears in the use of terms like ‘mystic’, ‘mystic-wonder worker’ or ‘philosopher’ in connection with disparate figures such as Io, Cleopatra, and Jesus and beginning with references to Seth and his pillars of knowledge set up after the Flood. There are similar references to theurgic displays (which, for example, enabled Picus Zeus to seduce many women).³⁵ Similar thought patterns lie behind Malalas’ use of the pagan oracles foretelling the Trinity.³⁶ Parallel to this is Malalas’ interest in Persian fireworship and Zorastrianism, information on which may derive from an identified Persian informant, Timotheos ‘the Persian carrier’.³⁷ Malalas also seeks to integrate into his world

from Axoum, which has nothing to do with Malalas’ experiences: XVIII § 56, Th 385, Bo 458; another is the bizarre phrase ζωγίν Νέμεσιν at I § 8, Th 10, P 13 which can only be explained by reference to the source at this point; see E. Jeffreys, “The Chronicle of Malalas. Book I: A commentary”, in P. Allen and E. Jeffreys, eds., *Sixth Century: End or beginning?* (Brisbane, 1996), 52–74, at 68. Such cases can be multiplied many times.

³³ II § 8, Th 23, Bo 31: Tyre; V § 65, Th 108, Bo 139: Scythopolis; XIV § 29, Th 209, Bo 367: Tripolis.

³⁴ On Malalas’ religious views generally, see B. Croke, “Malalas: The man”, *Studies*, 11–17; E. Jeffreys, “Malalas’ World View”, *Studies*, 64–6.

³⁵ I § 1, Th 4, P 6 and I § 5, Th 8–9, P 10: Seth; II § 7, Th 21, Bo 28: Io; IX § 10, Th 165, Bo 219: Cleopatra; X § 30, Th 189, Bo 250: Jesus; I § 13, Th 13, P 16: Picus Zeus. See Jeffreys, “Malalas’ World View”, *Studies*, 63–5 for a fuller list and discussion.

³⁶ These derive ultimately from the oracular utterances of the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D. and were put together in the late 5th century as a written collection in the text now known as the Tübingen Theosophy; the version used by Malalas seems in fact to date from the early years of the 6th century. See also H. Erbse, *Fragmente griechischen Theosophien* (Hamburg, 1941; new edition, 1997); S. Brock, “A Syriac Collection of Prophecies of the Pagan Philosophies”, *Orientalia Louvaniensia Periodica* 14 (1983), 203–46; R. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (London, 1986), 186.

³⁷ II § 20, Th 27–8, Bo 38: fire-worship; I § 11, Th 12, P 15 and § 7, Th 9,

picture the Olympian deities, remnants of the worship rituals of the pagan Hellenic world embedded in the texts which conveyed Greek literary culture. This he did by rationalising these figures as ordinary mortals in euhemerizing narratives: thus Dionysios becomes a lively aristocratic youth and Zeus a ruler who founds a dynasty and is harmonized into a Judaeo-Christian framework by becoming a member of the tribe of Shem.³⁸ But it is striking that most of Malalas' interest is in informal elements of sixth-century religious belief and practice. He has virtually nothing to say about the public religious controversies of his day, the Monophysite quarrels, for example; and he barely notes the controversies of the past, listing church councils but with no detail of their proceedings and decisions.³⁹ What he does note, however, are some martyrdoms and cults of saints.⁴⁰

One is left also with an impression of dogged, conscientious determination to worry out a solution to a problem, particularly where sources present conflicting opinions. This can be seen in Malalas' chronological calculations, even though the detail with which they are worked out is minimal in comparison, for example, to the calculations of Synkellos. Thus in the excursuses in Books X (§ 2, Th 173–4, Bo 277) and XVIII (§ 8, Th 357–8, Bo 429) Malalas attempts to argue against the standard figures in favour of his own, and warns against indiscriminate totalling of reign lengths since emperors tended to reign simultaneously. Similarly he records variant versions of the death of Julian.⁴¹

Interestingly Malalas, unlike most of his contemporaries, shows no sign of having produced his chronicle with a patron in mind. Perhaps

P 12: Zoroastrianism; XVIII § 30, Th 372, Bo 444: Timotheos informs Malalas about Persian Manichees.

³⁸ On Dionysios, see S. Reinert, "The Image of Dionysios in Malalas' Chronicle", in S. Vryonis, ed., *Byzantine Studies in Honor of Milton Anastos* (Malibu, 1985), 1–41. Generally, see S. Reinert, *Greek Myth in Johannes Malalas' Account of Ancient History*, Ph.D. thesis, University of California (Los Angeles, 1981); E. Hörling, *Mythos und Pistis: zur Deutung heidnischer Mythen in der christlichen Weltchronik des Johannes Malalas* (Lund, 1980).

³⁹ XIII § 11, Th 248, Bo 323: Nicaea; XIII § 40, Th 267, Bo 346: Constantinople; XIV § 25, Th 287, Bo 365: Ephesus; XIV § 30, Th 289, Bo 367: Chalcedon.

⁴⁰ For example, X § 9, Th 208, Bo 276: Ignatios; X § 10, Th 209, Bo 277: Drosine; XII § 35, Th 234, Bo 303: Babylas; XII § 36, Th 235, Bo 304: Kosmas and Damian; XII § 50, Th 241–2, Bo 314–5: Gelasinos; XIII § 19, Th 251, Bo 327: Domitios; XIV § 37, Th 291–2, Bo 369: Symeon the Styliste.

⁴¹ Cited are: Eutychianus (XIII § 23, Th 256, Bo 332), Eutropius (XIII § 25, Th 257, Bo 334) and an unattributed version which involved Basil of Caesarea and a dream of Saint Mercurius (XIII § 25, Th 257, Bo 333–4).

the only candidate who could be proposed is the Hermogenes who, as ambassador to Persia, plays so large a role in the work in the years preceding the putative ending of its first edition.⁴²

Transmission of the Chronicle

The history of the transmission of Malalas' chronicle is an intriguing saga.⁴³ This is an example of an important text that has survived independently by the narrowest of margins, in one manuscript only. Furthermore, there is considerable evidence from later witnesses in several languages that the text in that manuscript has been significantly abbreviated in many places. The manuscript (Ba, referred to earlier) has itself been overwritten at various points, usually to clarify a faded reading but occasionally to alter some linguistic forms.⁴⁴ Its missing folios, and some of the ways in which their contents can be partially reconstructed, have also been referred to earlier.

There survives an early though very fragmentary copy of the chronicle, the uncial palimpsest known as the Tusculan Fragments, usually dated to the late seventh century. This demonstrates conclusively that the Antiochene 'first edition' and the Constantinopolitan section of the chronicle circulated together, and also shows that the text in Ba has at times been substantially abbreviated.⁴⁵ Most of the other witnesses in Greek to Malalas' text come, however, in the form of excerpts.⁴⁶ These can be independent extracts, as is the case with the entries from Malalas contained in the *De insidiis* and *De virtutibus*,

⁴² Hermogenes, *magister officiorum* 529–33 (PLRE III *Hermogenes* 1). Agathias, Procopius, John the Lydian, Menander Protector, Paul the Silentary all had identifiable patrons who encouraged and supported their literary efforts: R. Scott, "Malalas and his Contemporaries", *Studies*, 81–2.

⁴³ The stages are set out in some detail in the chapter entitled "The Transmission of Malalas' Chronicle", *Studies*, 245–311.

⁴⁴ As is pointed out by J.B. Bury, "Johannes Malalas: The text of the codex Baroccianus", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 6 (1897), 219–30.

⁴⁵ Facsimiles most recently in G. Cavallo and H. Maehler, *Greek Bookhands of the Early Byzantine Period* (London, 1987), plate 49a; full reproduction in A. Mai, "De fragmentis historicis Tusculanis", *Spicilegium Romanum*, vol. 2 (Rome, 1839), Appendix, 1–28, after p. 28.

Details on editions and the portions of Malalas' text taken over by each of the works cited in the rest of this paragraph can be found in E. Jeffreys, "Malalas in Greek", *Studies*, 245–68.

⁴⁶ See also the lists in G. Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1958, 2nd ed.), 330–1.

two of the surviving books from the massive historical encyclopaedia commissioned by Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos. More frequently the excerpts are embedded, usually without acknowledgement, in other chroniclers. This process began early, as has been mentioned, with Evagrios, John of Antioch and the *Chronicon Paschale*, and continued with Theophanes (ca. 760–818), George Monachos (ca. 866), two anonymous world chronicles from the ninth century (Paris, Gr. 1336, ff. 143–61 and Paris, Gr. 854, ff. 71–99), the tenth-century Pseudo-Symeon and Kedrenos (ca. 1060). In the twelfth-century the hero portraits in Book V were plundered by Isaak Porphyrogennetos for his treatise on *What Homer left out*, and John Tzetzes for his prose and hexameter works which also aimed at filling in gaps in the Homeric narratives. It is this very success—in terms of the extensive use made of the text—which perhaps accounts for the fragility of the chronicle's independent survival, for once excerpted the chronicle had served its purpose and did not need independent recopying. The preamble had concluded with a request for Malalas' successors to continue the work, which could as well be achieved by incorporating extracts into their own works as by adding further entries to his.

Malalas' text was also influential outside the Greek-speaking sphere. Returning to its geographical roots, it was used by John of Ephesos (as has already been mentioned) and then taken up by a succession of Syriac chroniclers including Pseudo-Dionysus of Tell-Mahré (completed in 775) and Michael the Syrian (ending in 1195).⁴⁷ In the late seventh century John of Nikiu used it extensively in his Coptic chronicle, which now survives only in an Ethiopic translation of the Arabic version.⁴⁸ Also in the late seventh century, Theodore of Tarsus, sent from Rome in 669 to be archbishop of Canterbury, had extracted the passages of millennial debate to use in his own discussion, in Latin, on the date of the Second Coming and included as an appendix a list of imperial reigns based on Malalas' entries; this text is now known as the *Laterculus Malalianus*.⁴⁹ On a larger scale, some time in the eleventh century a translation of significant portions of

⁴⁷ For details see W. Witakowski, “Malalas in Syriac”, *Studies*, 299–310.

⁴⁸ H. Zotenberg, *Chronique de Jean, évêque de Nikiu* (Paris, 1883) (text and French translation); English translation: R.H. Charles, *The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu* (Oxford, 1916).

⁴⁹ J. Stevenson, “Malalas in Latin”, *Studies*, 287–99; and *eadem*, *The ‘Laterculus Malalianus’ and the School of Theodore of Tarsus* (Cambridge, 1995), with an edition of the text, translation and full discussion.

Malalas' chronicle was made into Old Church Slavonic: sections of this have become embedded in several later chronicles and provide a useful witness to the original form of the text.⁵⁰ All this material in Syriac, Ethiopic, Latin and Old Church Slavonic needs to be consulted in the reconstruction of the full original version of Malalas' Greek text, for any portion of these later witnesses may preserve a phrase or sentence that can be attributed to the original.

In part because of the multiplicity of witnesses and the variety of languages involved, the history of modern editions of Malalas is a melancholy one, with long periods of preparation brought to an end by the premature deaths of prospective editors. The new edition in the *Corpus Fontium Byzantinae Historiae* was delayed by the untimely deaths of two editors in succession,⁵¹ but has now been brought to fruition. However the history of the *editio princeps* also involved long delays.⁵² Originally planned in 1633 to be the first Greek text to be printed at the Clarendon Press in Oxford, it finally appeared, edited by Chilmead with introductory notes by Hody, in 1691. It was this that formed the basis for Ludwig Dindorf's 1831 edition in the Bonn Corpus with a number of often felicitous emendations—made, however, without recourse to the Oxford manuscript. Significant progress in understanding the identity of the author was made in the 1890s,⁵³ and von Stauffenberg's edition of books IX–XII in 1931 marked a major step forward, though only a partial one.⁵⁴ The English translation published in 1986 was the first attempt to bring together all the evidence for the full text of the original Malalas, using English rather than the multiple original languages.⁵⁵ It was also the first translation of the whole chronicle into a modern language.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ S. Franklin, "Malalas in Slavonic", *Studies*, 276–87; Franklin's collations of the Greek and the Slavonic text are incorporated in the apparatus to the 1986 English translation. The Slavonic chronicle passages that draw on Malalas were identified and edited by V. Istrin in a series of papers published in Odessa between 1897 and 1914; there is now a new revised edition by M.I. Cernyseva (Moscow, 1994).

⁵¹ Editions were planned by K. Weierholt (1902–73) and H. Thurn (died 1992).

⁵² B. Croke, "The Development of a Critical Text", *Studies*, 314–24.

⁵³ A debate conducted at times with acrimony in the pages of the newly founded *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* until halted by Krumbacher ("Anmerkung der Redaktion", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 10 [1901], 53); see B. Croke, "Modern Study of Malalas", *Studies*, 324–38.

⁵⁴ A. Schenk von Stauffenberg, *Die römische Kaisergeschichte bei Malalas* (Stuttgart, 1931).

⁵⁵ A revised version is planned to appear shortly, now that the edition in the *Corpus Fontium* has been published.

⁵⁶ Chilmead's Latin translation appears in the Bonn edition and in *PG* XCVII, cols. 65–717.

Language of the Chronicle

A striking feature of Malalas' chronicle is the register of Greek in which it is expressed: this is the first substantial work in medieval Greek which uses a form of the vernacular in preference to the literary language.⁵⁷ Questions arise. The language used by Malalas certainly differs in many respects from that of his near, and classicizing, contemporary Procopius. But it has to be asked how many of Malalas's usages might also be found in Procopius and how many may be isolated as indeed vernacular, for this is a matter of surface rather than the real essence of their respective language usages. Procopius uses some obvious classical markers, while Malalas does not avoid some characteristically vernacular language, when the evidence of the non-literary papyri is taken into account for the spoken language of the period.⁵⁸ Many more linguistic studies are needed; in the meantime it is simpler to list some of Malalas' vernacular elements.⁵⁹

In the morphology of verbs, for example, the aorist is developing forms in *-α* rather than *-ov*; there is a confusion between aorist and perfect and a reduction in the use of the future for which the present tense or a periphrastic form is substituted; there is a decrease in participial usage and a move towards indeclinable modern forms. In syntax there is a blurring between *ἴνα* and *όπως*, and *εἰ* and *ἐάν*. Prepositions show a preference for the accusative, though there are frequent confusions over case. Vocabulary includes many examples of non-classical and presumably vernacular usages, some of which are attested for the first time in the chronicle; there are also a marked number of loan words, the majority of which are from Latin and have technical military or administrative applications.

A conspicuous element in Malalas' style is the number of repetitive elements it includes. There are redundant phrases, chief amongst these being *ὁ αὐτός* ('the same'), and *λεγομένος* ('so called'), and to a lesser extent *όμοίως* and *ώσαντως*. There are also formulaic expressions of time: 'in this reign', 'at that time', 'in that year'. Further

⁵⁷ P. Helms, "Syntaktische Untersuchungen zu Ioannes Malalas und Georgios Sphrantzes", *Helikon* 11–12 (1971–2), 309–88, at 313.

⁵⁸ F.T. Gignac, *A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, vol. 1: *Phonology* (Milan, 1977); vol. 2: *Morphology* (Milan, 1981). See also G. Horrocks, *Greek: A history of the language and its speakers* (London, 1998).

⁵⁹ For a succinct discussion of Malalas' linguistic usages, with further bibliography, see A. James, "Language of Malalas. 1: A general survey", *Studies*, 217–25.

formulaic expressions appear in reports of, for example, imperial benefactions after a natural disaster or on the creation of a province.⁶⁰ Another category involves brief and stylised verbal portraits, chiefly of the Greek and Trojan heroes (in Book V) and emperors (from Tiberius [X § 7, Th 177, Bo 232] onwards. While Malalas made a major contribution to this genre, which continued in the chronicle tradition subsequently, its origins can be traced back to Egyptian legal documents and rhetorical physiognomic literature.⁶¹

Of Malalas' excerptors, some—like Theophanes—were inclined to raise the linguistic register slightly, or at least to omit redundant words and phrases; others, like the *Chronicon Paschale*, took over the morphology and syntax unchanged. Evagrius, who referred to Malalas by name, made no comment about his style or language. Such extensive borrowing within a century of the chronicle's composition would suggest that the linguistic register was not necessarily offensive, even if at times it broke Byzantine taboos concerning the writing of the vernacular. Does this have implications for the audience for whom Malalas was writing his chronicle? Was there a readership for works written at a less than classicizing level of the language?

This is not an easy question to answer, given the dearth of direct evidence of parallel cases (only Cosmas Indicopleustes comes readily to mind); circular reasoning is all too likely. However, if Malalas were indeed an official in the bureau of the *comes Orientis*, fitted to this role by his educational attainments and his literary interests, then perhaps it is at this level of Byzantine society that his readers should be supposed—among literate but not learned bureaucrats, with a sense of their city's past and an interest in maintaining its functions. Some six hundred such bureaucrats were employed in the Antiochene *scrinia*.⁶² It was for a comparable group that John Lydus wrote his antiquarian treatises in Constantinople (at a higher linguistic register, though sharing several common themes with Malalas).⁶³ The chronicle was plainly read by those who used it. Whether this implies a wide reading public is another issue, raising unanswerable questions about levels of literacy and the circulation of books in the sixth century.

⁶⁰ M. Jeffreys, "Language of Malalas. 2: Formulaic phraseology", *Studies*, 225–31.

⁶¹ E. Jeffreys and M. Jeffreys, "Language of Malalas. 3. Portraits", *Studies*, 231–44.

⁶² B. Croke, "Malalas: The man", *Studies*, 11.

⁶³ R. Scott, "Malalas and his Contemporaries", *Studies*, 67–85, at 72–5.

Chronological Systems

The Byzantine world chronicle provided a temporal framework into which was set mankind's history, both sacred (mankind's creation and salvation) and secular (the sequence of kingdoms and empires). Malalas had several patterns with which to express this, but he was not interested either in detailed tabulation, of the sort found with sparse annotations in Eusebius' charts, or in precise calculations, of the sort produced by Synkellos in connection with the date of Easter. Nor was he concerned to provide a year-by-year listing in the manner of his successors in the chronicle tradition, the *Chronicon Paschale* or Theophanes. Rather his technique in the earlier books was to provide broad synchronisms between sacred and secular history⁶⁴ and elaborate these with narratives,⁶⁵ as though fleshing out a skeletal annalistic list. A similar technique can be seen in the later 'historical' books, from Book X and the inauguration of the Roman Empire from Augustus onwards. After this the chronicle is structured by imperial reign, with some attempt at chronological sequencing within the reign but frequently with blocks of narrative that cover several years;⁶⁶ later excerptors, such as the *Chronicon Paschale*, at times clearly found it difficult to place chronologically events recorded by Malalas.⁶⁷

Nevertheless there is a strong chronological framework to his chronicle, as has already been discussed. This was provided by the sequence of dates From Adam, which argue that the world had already reached the seventh millennium. Malalas' arguments on this point appear in Book X § 2 (Th 172–3, Bo 228) (in connection with the incarnation, where the logic behind their inclusion is clear) and in Book XVIII § 8 (Th 357–8, Bo 428) in connection with the year 527/8. Here there is no obvious reason for the discussion and one can only surmise that there was a contemporary relevance which is no longer

⁶⁴ Perhaps most clearly expressed in the information given about Kronos and Picus Zeus (I § 8, Th 9–10, P 12; I § 12, Th 12, P15; III § 6, Th 42, Bo 59; III § 11, Th 44, Bo 62) where they and their descendants are correlated with Shem, Abraham and Moses; but similar thoughts are behind all the king lists: see E. Jeffreys, "Malalas' Chronological Structures", *Studies*, 124–38 (ruler lists).

⁶⁵ Thus in Book II Inachos and Io (§ 7, Th 20–2, Bo 28–30), Tauros and Europe (§ 8, Th 22–3, Bo 30–32), Phoinix (§ 9, Th 23–5, Bo 32), Perseus and Danae (§ 13–14, Th 25–7, Bo 34–7) etc. all pad out the sequence of rulers.

⁶⁶ For example, XI § 3–6, Th 204–7, Bo 269–74: Trajan's Parthian Wars; XV § 9, Th 306–11, Bo 383–6: on Zeno's relations with Theodoric.

⁶⁷ M. and M. Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale*, xxii.

understood. There are the remnants of a similar major chronological digression in 491, at the death of Zeno and the passing of the year 6000 by the Alexandrian era.⁶⁸ The details of the debate to which Malalas was contributing are now largely lost, though there is interesting corroboration from fragments of Heyschius, a near contemporary who also wrote a (lost) *Patria* of Constantinople, that show that Malalas was not unsupported in his millennial views.⁶⁹ These views provide the pivotal points of Malalas' conception of world history: creation is the beginning of time, Phalek is at the mid-point of time (the year 3000; II § 12, Th 25, Bo 34 and X § 2, Th 173, Bo 227), the crucifixion (and man's salvation) in the year 6000 (X § 2, Th 173, Bo 228). In between are noted other staging points; of these some are obviously significant (VIII § 2, Th 147, Bo 193: the birth of Alexander the Great; XV § 16, Th 318, Bo 391: the passing of the year 6000 by the Alexandrian era), while the significance of others is less apparent. Textual problems in Ba add to the obscurity.⁷⁰ Given Malalas' reliance on his sources, his inefficiency at times in culling his material (discussed below) as well as corruption in transmission, it is not surprising that the importance of this structure to the chronicle was long overlooked.

Into this basic framework with its Christian world view was inserted secular history, and onto it was layered a number of more conventional chronological trappings, even if Malalas had frequently taken these over from his sources and had not necessarily integrated them well.

Thus for the early Greek states (and legendary history), there are king lists—for Argos, Sikyon, Tyre, Boiotia, Attica, Lakonia, Hellas, Lakedaimonia, Corinth, Phrygia and so forth, now much truncated and distorted. These are ultimately derived from the lists compiled by, for example, Kastor of Rhodes (1st century A.D.), which made their way into the chronographies of Sextus Julius Africanus and Eusebius; the forms found in Malalas have much in common with the lists in

⁶⁸ At XV § 16, Th 318, Bo 391, though not all the witnesses are included in the apparatus to the translation at that point; see Jeffreys, "Chronological Structures", *Studies*, 117–18 for a discussion of all the evidence.

⁶⁹ The text of Hesychius' sermon on the nativity which gives this date is available in Hody's preface to the Malalas Bonn edition at pp. li–liii.

⁷⁰ E.g. insolubly at VI § 17, Th 125, Bo 162: 'to this time'; though solutions are available at X § 2, Th 173, Bo 228; XV § 16, Th 318, Bo 391; and XVIII § 8, Th 357, Bo 428, thanks to other witnesses.

the late fifth-century *Excerpta Barbari*.⁷¹ As indicated above, these lists and their synchronisms provided a basis on which could be hung euhemerizing narratives derived from the Greek literary tradition.

In the area of the chronicle structured by imperial reigns, events are sometimes dated by consuls; the forms of the names suggest that Malalas was possibly using consular lists related to the *Fasti Vindobonenses*.⁷² Especially in the latter part of Book XVIII dating by indication becomes quite frequent. Very occasional use is also made of dating by other eras, such as that of Diocletian, the Seleucid era (in use in Antioch; it is perhaps surprising that more use was not made of this), or the Roman calendar. All these arguably were taken from Malalas' sources.

Other chronological elements were probably due to Malalas' own interventions. These include a list of earthquakes, some of which were numbered; this is the type of information which would have been kept in Antioch's city archive, to which Malalas could have had access, if he was employed in the provincial administration; note that the numbered earthquake sequence is fullest for Antioch. Lists of dignitaries can also be reconstructed, notably a sequence of the *comites Orientis*, who were based in Antioch, and of the patriarchs of Antioch.⁷³

It is striking that Malalas does not use the four-year Olympiad cycle. This dating element was fundamental to Eusebius' chronology and was also used by Malalas' main chronicle successor, the *Chronicon Paschale*, despite the fact that by the seventh century it had lost all real meaning.⁷⁴

⁷¹ The fundamental work on the king lists remains that of H. Gelzer, *Sextus Julius Africanus und die byzantinische Chronographie* (Leipzig, 1885). The *Excerpta Barbari* survive only in an eighth-century Latin translation: C. Frick, ed., *Chronica minora* (Leipzig, 1893).

⁷² A consular list drawn up in the late fifth or early sixth centuries; Th. Mommsen, ed., *Chronica Minora I*, *MGH*, *Auctores Antiquissimi* 9 (Berlin, 1892), 274–336; see also R. Bagnall et al., *Consuls of the Later Roman Empire* (Atlanta, 1987), 48–50.

⁷³ For details on all these, see E. Jeffreys, "Chronological Structures", *Studies*, 143–64.

⁷⁴ It is an interesting but inconclusive thought that the emphasis placed by Malalas on the Antiochene Olympic Games could have been related to his non-use of a feature that must have been prominent in his chronological sources.

Sources

There are two reasons why it is worth considering Malalas' sources in some detail.⁷⁵ First, unusually for a Byzantine writer, he names many authorities as the sources for his statements, thus raising questions about the nature of the literary culture from which he came and the library provisions to which he had access; second, since he is the sole witness for much information, especially about Antioch, it would be helpful to be able to assess the basis for his statements.

In his preamble, Malalas indicates that there is a division in his chronicle. The change comes with the events of his lifetime, and is associated with the reign of the emperor Zeno, irrespective of whether this means that Malalas was born or reached maturity under Zeno. There is indeed a perceptible change after Book XIV, which closes with the death of Leo I and the comment that here ended the chronicle of Nestorianos. From this point on, the chronicle, beginning with the reign of Zeno in Book XV, is structured with each book devoted to a single imperial reign and with virtually none of the source citations that had been frequent previously.

It is justifiable then to see the chronicle falling, from the point of view of its sources, into three sections: Books I to XIV, XV to XVIII § 76 (Th 401, Bo 477) and XVIII § 77 to the end.⁷⁶

To deal first with the issue of the citations. At first sight the range of these is impressive: temporally, the authorities extend over Greek literature from Homer to Malalas' contemporaries, covering poets and historians, as well as philosophers and theologians, to say nothing of the scriptures, and with a sprinkling of Latin citations as well.⁷⁷ Further investigation produces another picture and shows that most of this material is gathered at second hand and that Malalas will not have known directly more than a tiny proportion of the texts and authors that he cites. Thus clusters of citations appear to be taken as a group from other texts: Deinarchos, Philochoros and Kephalion, for example, are cited at II § 28, Th 32, Bo 45 on Dionysos' arms at Delphi; this passage is found also in Eusebius and

⁷⁵ Even if *Quellenkritik* is now falling out of fashion: see J. Ljubarskij, “*Quellenforschung* and/or literary criticism: narrative structure in Byzantine historical writings”, *Symbolae Osloenses* 73 (1998), 5–24, with varied responses at 25–73.

⁷⁶ As has been discussed above, XVIII § 76, Th 401, Bo 477 marks perhaps the most likely finishing point for the first edition of the chronicle.

⁷⁷ See the table in E. Jeffreys, “Malalas' Sources”, *Studies*, 167–216, at 170.

Synkellos and probably derives ultimately from Africanus. Citations are not infrequently given with a string of authorities. It is tempting to assume that the last cited author is the actual source for Malalas' reference, though sometimes the statement is so garbled and vague that even this is doubtful: at VI § 10, Th 122, Bo 157, for example, Theophilos is the last authority cited, after Thallos, Kastor, Polybios and Herodotos, for a statement on Croesus of Lydia; but it is far from clear what the name Theophilos meant to Malalas.⁷⁸ The garbled nature of a statement is sometimes in itself grounds for suspecting that Malalas could never have encountered it in its ungarbled state—in other words, there must have been an intermediary. This is particularly so in the case of the Latin authors referred to: Malalas is most unlikely to have consulted Ovid (I § 3, Th 5, P7) or Servius (I § 3, Th 6, P8; VI § 19, Th 126, Bo 162; VII § 9, Th 139, Bo 181) in their original language. It must be admitted, however, that the passage from Vergil (*Aen.* 4, 302–3) quoted in Greek at XII § 3, Th 216, Bo 285 is recognizable, and may with caution be used to evaluate vowel shifts in contemporary speech.⁷⁹

Despite such reservations, in some cases it is possible to compare Malalas' quotations with an extant text and conclude that he did know it at first-hand. Perhaps the best instance of this comes in the lines quoted from Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Tauris*.⁸⁰ His quotations from the Orphic hymns are accepted as genuine fragments.⁸¹ In the case of his references to Diktyos of Crete and his Diaries on the Trojan War, which otherwise survive only in a Latin version, papyrus finds have largely vindicated the status of the Greek version which makes up most of Book V.⁸²

⁷⁸ Theophilos is cited as a key figure in Malalas' chronological debates; amongst the extant works of Theophilos, Bishop of Antioch, died ca. 180, are his three treatises *Ad Autolycum* which attempt to reconcile pagan and Christian chronologies—but none of the statements attributed to a Theophilos by Malalas can be corroborated in these texts; see R.M. Grant, *Theophilus of Antioch, Ad Autolycum* (Oxford, 1970).

⁷⁹ B. Baldwin, “Dio Cassius and John Malalas: Two ancient readings of Virgil”, *Emerita* 55 (1987), 85–6.

⁸⁰ In connection with the Orestes legends, at V § 63, Th 105–6, Bo 137: *Iphigeneia in Tauris* 69–70, 72–3, 103–5, 238, 241, 246, 248–51, 254–5, 495, 510, 771, 774, 790–1.

⁸¹ What is now known as the Rhapsodic Theogony is quoted at IV § 8–10, Th 51–4, Bo 72–6, with prose paraphrases (= frags. 62, 65, 233); see M.L. West, *The Orphic Poems* (Oxford, 1983), 227ff.

⁸² W. Eisenhut, “Zum neueren Diktyos-Papyrus”, *Rheinisches Museum*, N.F. 112 (1969), 114–19 and *idem*, *Dictys Cretensis: Bellum Troianum* (Leipzig, 1973); see also E. Jeffreys, “Malalas’ Sources”, *Studies*, 176–7, 192–3 for further bibliography.

On several occasions Malalas indicates that he has himself hunted out a particular source; doubt has already been cast on the trustworthiness of these statements. Elsewhere he contrasts versions of events given by different authorities, and indicates his preference. When dealing with Hellenic mythology, this can be a general rejection of an account from a poet, or one told poetically, in preference to one by a sober prose writer; or it can be a statement that authorities differ (on Valerian's Persian campaign, for example, or the death of Attila).⁸³ While it can always be argued that such comparisons may be derived from Malalas' source, one example must surely be his own work: this is the comparison of this type which is the basis for the chronological excurses, and for the contrast between the millennial dates put forward by Eusebius and Timotheos, which is arguably one of the main purposes of the chronicle.

Despite his apparent openness about his sources, Malalas clearly used many authorities and types of material which he does not acknowledge. Some may be checked against written texts that survive independently, like the extensive quotations from the Septuagint.⁸⁴ He also quotes oracles from the collection now known as the Tübingen Theosophy. In other cases documents are cited: their nature is plain from their contents and contexts, although they have not survived independently; examples include Verina's rescript of 486 (XV § 13, Th 314, Bo 389) and Koades' letter to Justinian (XVIII § 44, Th 378, Bo 449–50). In yet other cases, we must surmise that a document or record was consulted, because of the nature of the information provided. This is the case with notices of legislation, or with matters which could have come from the *acta* or archives of Antioch or from the office of the *comes Orientis* (such as reports on disasters and disaster relief, or reports on rebellions).⁸⁵ Other sets of information can also be identified—on the creation of provinces or the *tychai* of cities—which are not attributed to a source but which are likely to have been available as written lists. Malalas' citations of inscriptions

⁸³ E.g. at II § 42, Th 38, Bo 53 Euripides is contrasted with Palaiphatos; at IV § 11, Th 54, Bo 77 'the poets' are rejected in favour of Ninos and Lucian; XII § 26, Th 229, Bo 297: Dominnos on Valerian is preferred to Philostratos; XIV § 10, Th 279, Bo 359: Priskos' account of Attila is contrasted with a general 'others say'; for other examples, see E. Jeffreys, "Malalas' Sources", *Studies*, 214–15.

⁸⁴ V § 70–72, Th 113–16, Bo 144–9: Sennacherib's raid on Jerusalem, taken almost word for word from *Isaiah* 36 and 37.

⁸⁵ Details in E. Jeffreys, "Malalas' Sources", *Studies*, 200–9.

possibly also come into this category: it has long since been shown that Malalas had not sighted and recorded these himself but had taken them from an intermediary.⁸⁶

Other blocks of material by their nature suggest the use of oral informants. Thus, for example, the details reported in connection with the Trisagion riots in Constantinople in 512 and Vitalian's rebellion in 513 are most likely to have come from Marinus the Syrian, prominent in both episodes and probably linked to Malalas by profession as well as ethnic background. Other likely informants are Hermogenes, *magister officiorum* in 529–533 and one of the negotiators with Persia prior to the Endless Peace, and Timothy 'the Persian carrier'.⁸⁷

So far this discussion has focussed on features from the chronicle as a whole that can be isolated and attributed to sources of different types. This was the approach taken in the most recent study on Malalas and his sources.⁸⁸ The two previous major discussions of Malalas' sources, by Bourrier (dealing with Books I–XIV) and von Stauffenberg (focussing on Books IX–XII) were more concerned to isolate major portions of the text that could be attributed as blocks to Malalas' predecessors, thus reducing Malalas' own role in the composition of the chronicle and denying that the selection of material was an expression of his own interests.⁸⁹

Bourrier concluded that Malalas was drawing on four sources in the first fourteen books. Of these Domninos was mentioned in the preamble, Timotheos was included there by implication (as one of the "chroniclers who agree among themselves", the others being Theophilos and Clement—who are named in the preamble), while Nestorianos is cited in the body of the chronicle. Bourrier's Fourth Source is an unnamed and unidentifiable entity, postulated to account

⁸⁶ G. Downey, "Imperial Building Records in Malalas", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 38 (1938), 299–311.

⁸⁷ Marinus: XVI § 16, Th 329–32, Bo 403–5, and § 19, Th 333–4, Bo 407–8; Hermogenes: many details on the wars with Persia in XVIII § 34 (Th 373, Bo 445), § 36 (Th 375, Bo 447–8), § 44 (Th 377, Bo 449–50), § 50 (Th 380–1, Bo 452–3), § 53–4 (Th 383, Bo 456), § 58 (Th 386, Bo 460), § 60–1 (Th 387–90, Bo 461–7), § 65–6 (Th 391–2, Bo 468–70), § 68–9 (Th 293–4, Bo 471–2), § 76 (Th 401, Bo 477–8); Timothy: XVIII § 30, Th 372, Bo 444.

⁸⁸ In *Studies*, 167–216, with contributions from B. Croke.

⁸⁹ P.H. Bourier, *Über die Quellen der ersten vierzehn Bücher des Johannes Malalas* (Augsburg, 1899); A. Schenk von Stauffenberg, *Die römische Kaisergeschichte bei Malalas* (Stuttgart, 1931).

for whatever cannot be attributed to the other three. In general terms, Domninos was responsible for Antiochene material, Timotheos for parallel history between the biblical and secular spheres and for the oracular elements, Nestorianos for material dealing with Christ's life and the limited ecclesiastical history in the chronicle, while the Fourth Source is inevitably a rag-bag. Von Stauffenberg argued for three major sources: a *Kaisergeschichte*, a Christian world chronicle and an Antiochene *patria*. The two views are not incompatible: Domninos could be equated with von Stauffenberg's *patria*, and Timotheos with the Christian world chronicle. Many of Bourrier's points about the divisions in the text of the chronicle are valid: thus there are clear doublets of information at VIII § 28, Th 158, Bo 209, where entries on Perseus/Perses of Macedon and Lucius Paulus have been pasted together inefficiently; and the phrase 'above-mentioned' also marks disjunctions between blocks of material from different sources (this is clearest at VI § 16, Th 125, Bo 161 where material is resumed from the *Excerpta Barbari*, last used at I § 15, Th 11, P19).

On the whole then, it is justifiable to conclude that blocks of material which betray common interests may well have been taken over as a whole from earlier writers: thus legendary history on Antioch may well have been filtered through Domninos. However, since none of these putative sources survive, the extent to which they have been adapted or distorted can only be conjectured. But for all his dependence on his sources, it is justifiable to argue that Malalas also had agendas of his own, made his own contributions to the material he took over and moulded it as he wished. The interweaving of the large blocks itself exemplifies the process of selection and manipulation, as do the 'back references' which occur intermittently throughout the text and show a measure of control over the contents;⁹⁰ the last occur in XVIII at § 14, Th 361, Bo 431, referring back to VI § 16, Th 125, Bo 161 and Herakles in Spain, and at XVIII § 76, Th 401, Bo 477, referring back to XVI § 6, Th 326, Bo 398 and the beginning of the war with Persia under Anastasios. Other elements in the chronicle transcend the source divisions postulated by Bourrier by appearing in a variety of contexts. These are likely to be due to Malalas himself; good examples are the From Adam dates and the lists of Antiochene earthquakes.⁹¹

⁹⁰ For a full list see B. Croke, "Malalas: The man", *Studies*, 20–1; and also E. Jeffreys, "Malalas' Sources", *Studies*, 215–16.

⁹¹ E. Jeffreys, "Chronological Structures", *Studies*, 164–6.

For the section running from Books XV to XVIII § 76 (Th 401, Bo 477) Malalas would have drawn on historians such as Eustathius of Epiphaneia, whom he acknowledges, and possibly also Priskos of Panium, as well as oral informants like Marinus the Syrian and Hermogenes, while for the last Constantinopolitan section he would have used what public notices came to his attention.

Predecessors

Malalas' essential predecessors in the genre in which he was working are not necessarily identical with the sources listed above. They also come from both sides of the divide which used to be prominent in modern handbooks, between chroniclers and historians.⁹² The blurring can be seen in the list of writers in the chronicle's preamble where the chronicler Africanus, the ultimate source for most of Malalas' chronological listings, and Diodoros and Domninos, narrative historians even if very different from each other, are listed together. One way of looking at Malalas's work is as a survey of world history with a strong chronological argument.

By the sixth century chronography and world surveys had a long heritage.⁹³ After the expansion of the Greek-speaking world and the proliferation of states and kingdoms, the Hellenistic period saw a need for the construction of lists of rulers and the establishment of synchronisms between them.⁹⁴ An important figure in this early stage was the Egyptian priest Manetho (3rd cent. B.C.), named by Malalas but known to him only indirectly. Subsequent important figures in the constructions of synchronistic lists were Eratosthenes (c. 275–194 B.C.) and Apollodorus (born c. 180 B.C.), while later still further king lists were drawn up by Kastor of Rhodes (1st cent. B.C.) and Phlegon of Tralles (2nd cent. A.D.), both also named by Malalas. These lists gave the bare bones of history. Universal narrative his-

⁹² Even H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche Literatur der Byzantiner*, 2 vols. (Munich, 1977–8), has a separate section on the nature of chronicles, even if subsequently chroniclers and historians are treated together.

⁹³ For a fuller discussion, see B. Croke, “The Early Development of Byzantine Chronicles”, *Studies*, 27–38 and *idem*, “The Origins of the Christian World Chronicle”, in B. Croke and A. Emmett, eds., *History and Historians in Late Antiquity* (Sydney, 1983), 116–31.

⁹⁴ W. Adler, *Time Immortal: Archaic history and its sources in Christian chronography from Julius Africanus to George Syncellus* (Washington, D.C., 1989).

tories were also composed, for example by Diodorus Siculus (died c. 21 B.C.; named by Malalas) or Dionysos of Halikarnassos (fl. 7 B.C.).

With the spread of Christianity in the Roman world, a further need for synchronization arose, that of secular events with biblical history, leading to a polemic that crystallised in arguments over the relative dates of Moses and Plato. Important figures in these chronological debates were Justin Martyr (c. 100–165 A.D.), Tatian (fl. 160 A.D.), Theophilos (fl. c. 169 A.D.) and his three treatises addressed to Autolycus, and Clement of Alexandria (born c. 150 A.D.) and his *Stromateis*; the last two are cited by Malalas in his chronological passages though the statements cannot be matched to their extant works and he almost certainly did not know their writings directly. Highly significant advances were made by Sextus Julius Africanus (ca. 220 A.D.), whose work underlies many of Malalas' ruler lists.

The major figure in the development of a Christian chronography was Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260–340 A.D.); in his two-part Chronicle he presented lists that could form the raw material for a world history, and then expressed this history in Olympiads from Abraham to his day in tabular arrangement, in parallel files of kingdoms. As chronological debate continued, in the fifth century two Egyptian monks, Panadoros and Annianos, discussed the date of the incarnation. Their work, however, and that of their contemporaries has all but vanished, small portions only being preserved, for example, in the early ninth-century *Chronographia* of George Synkellos. The disappearance of so many of these texts has the effect of making Malalas' work appear more unusual than it was. If we had access to them, we should be less surprised, either by the fact that he attempted a synoptic Christianising world history or that he constructed it in narrative format rather than the tables popularised by Eusebius and his Latin continuator, Jerome.

Other lost late fifth- and early sixth-century chronicles and histories might have been similar in format and ideas to that of Malalas. These include the Greek *Excerpta Barbari*, surviving now only in a Latin translation but compiled in the last years of the fifth century; this combines consular lists (with some affinities to Malalas' consular information) and a narrative, parts of which reappear in Malalas, in particular the passages on Picus Zeus. There was also the *Chronike historike* of Eustathios of Epiphaneia, in two parts, running to 502 and cut short by author's death; it is cited by Malalas (XVI § 9,

Th 326, Bo 399) but as little else survives it is impossible to conclude how much of Malalas' information, for example, on Zeno and Anastasius might derive from him. Perhaps the most significant of all Malalas' contemporaries is Hesychius *Illustris*, born under Anastasius (and so a younger contemporary of Malalas), from whose pen there survives a passage, as has been discussed earlier, arguing for the same unusual crucifixion date (AM 6000) supported by Malalas. Hesychius also seems to have written extensively on historical issues, but questions of mutual indebtedness are impossible to resolve.⁹⁵

Malalas was thus writing within a tradition that had a long history, and one which was significant since “a correct understanding of chronology made sense of history”,⁹⁶ and of mankind’s place within it. Although Malalas is the first extant Byzantine world chronicler, there were many antecedents and several contemporary parallels: it is an accident of textual history which makes his text appear surprising and unique.

Successors

World chronicles continued to be written in the Greek-speaking East Mediterranean long after the sixth century and Malalas. In these can frequently be seen reflected the picture of the ancient world found in Malalas: there may have been little interest in his eccentric world era and dating of the incarnation and crucifixion, or in most of his material on Antioch, but the emphasis on kings and empires remained. Thus republican Rome, virtually ignored by Malalas, remained a minor element in Byzantine historiography until Zonaras in the twelfth century. Many of Malalas’ narratives were also reused: for example, euhemerizing passages on Picus Zeus and the legends surrounding Io reappear in George Monachos⁹⁷ and accounts of the Trojan War are prominent in Constantine Manasses’ verse chronicle in the twelfth century.

⁹⁵ See Phot. *Bibl.*, cod. 69; also *PLRE II Hesychius 'Illustris'* 14; also note 69 above, and A. Moffatt, “A Record of Public Buildings and Monuments”, *Studies*, 96–8.

⁹⁶ B. Croke, “Early Byzantine Chronicle”, *Studies*, 37.

⁹⁷ II § 4–9 are reflected in George Monachos (C. de Boor, ed., *Chronicon*, Leipzig, 1904; 2nd ed. P. Wirth, Stuttgart, 1978), 15.12–17.23. Lists of passages from Malalas reflected in later witnesses are noted *passim* in E. Jeffreys, “Malalas in Greek”, *Studies*, 245–68.

The *Chronicon Paschale*, composed in the early 630s by someone in the entourage of the Patriarch Sergius, is the next surviving example of a world chronicle, also written with a particular agenda, in this case concerning calculations on the date of Easter.⁹⁸ The author knew of Malalas' work, although only in its first edition since he makes no use of material from the latter part of Book XVIII; he makes extensive use of Malalas' entries on mythological history but clearly found the lack of chronological precision a difficulty.⁹⁹ The *Chronicon Paschale* was constructed annalistically, with an entry for each year, whether or not there was information to be entered up; the author worked by Olympiads and years from creation and, subsequently, by years from the incarnation.

Several historical surveys that survive in fragmentary form drew on elements of Malalas in the intervening centuries, but the next major chronicle in the tradition is that of Synkellos-Theophanes. George Synkellos (died after 810) drew up a collection of extracts from a wide range of writers to illustrate world history from creation to his own day; his chronological agenda was to argue for the correlation between the week of creation and the days of Christ's passion.¹⁰⁰ His scholarly attitudes seem to have found Malalas' approaches unsatisfactory for he makes relatively little use of his text. This was not the case with Theophanes, the friend to whom Synkellos bequeathed his notes and a request to complete his chronicle, which had reached Diocletian. Theophanes drew extensively on Malalas,¹⁰¹ though his own work was structured very differently, by Anno Mundi (Years from Creation), and with each year marked in addition by dates from the incarnation, regnal years of the Roman and Persian emperors, and bishops of Rome, Constantinople and Antioch.

Subsequently the world chronicle—despite the exception of George Monachos—ceased to be an important outlet for Byzantine historical expression. A more biographical approach came to the fore, exemplified in works produced under the aegis of Constantine

⁹⁸ On the later Byzantine chronicle tradition, see R. Scott, "The Byzantine Chronicle after Malalas", *Studies*, 38–54.

⁹⁹ M. Whitby and M. Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale*, xviii–xix.

¹⁰⁰ Discussed also in W. Adler, *Time Immemorial* (as in note 94 above).

¹⁰¹ As can be seen from the annotations to de Boor's edition (*Chronographia*, Leipzig, 1880) and to the English translation by C. Mango and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor* (Oxford, 1997).

Porphyrogennetos, such as those of Theophanes Continuatus or Genesios. This process reached its height with the *Chronographia* of Michael Psellos and the *Alexiad* of Anna Komnene.

Nevertheless the genre of world chronicle did not disappear entirely. It was in this tradition that in the mid-twelfth century Constantine Manasses wrote his verse *Synopsis Historike*, and in the thirteenth century that Joel and Ephraim each produced a *Chronographia*, though neither work was much more than a list of rulers. Also in the thirteenth century Theodore Skoutariotes, metropolitan of Kyzikos, composed his world history with recourse to good sources; these included a complete copy of Malalas. Entries in Skoutariotes' work enable some of the lacunas in the Oxford manuscript of Malalas to be partially filled. The Byzantine world chronicle tradition continued even after the Fall of Constantinople, with the sixteenth-century compilation attributed to Dorotheos of Monemvasia. Published under the title *Biblion Historikon*, this continued to be reprinted until the early years of the nineteenth century, extending the influence of Malalas' world view through the Turkish period of Greek history and into the historiography of the independent Greek state.¹⁰²

Conclusion

If Malalas is considered in his sixth-century context with appropriate regard for elements of that context which have been lost to us, he is a fascinating example of the Byzantine *mentalité* of that time. Recent work has suggested an environment for him in Byzantine provincial administration which allows his work to be used more fully as a gauge of Byzantine attitudes, despite his eccentricities. All too often, however, he has been viewed as degenerate from a classicising perspective and he has been castigated by modern historians for failing to meet the standards of nineteenth- or twentieth-century historical research. It is indeed a mistake to use the chronicle as a historical source for any period before the late fifth century. The importance of the early books is as an invaluable witness to the way in which the past was viewed by a reasonably well-read Byzantine, perhaps a more significant point of view than that of the highly-educated

¹⁰² R. Scott, "The Byzantine Chronicle after Malalas", *Studies*, 52–4.

writers whose views are normally given greater prominence. On the events for which he used oral sources, his information and views are of great significance. They naturally need sensitive examination and judicious interpretation, but probably in less measure than the partisan discourse of Procopius.

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